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EDUCATIONAL TRAINING FOR FOREIGN TRADE

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AS the representative of that half-century-old institution, the Georgetown University Law School, and that young but vigorous off-shoot of Georgetown University—The Foreign Service School, I want to describe the origin, record and field of effort of the Foreign Service School, with which I am connected as lecturer in certain branches.

No doubt you are familiar with the very practical way in which British youths during numerous generations have prepared themselves for entrance into world-trade. It consists for the most part in travel and residence in foreign lands—more particularly in those countries where the future course of trading will occur. After a sojourn abroad covering a series of years, their system calls for a return to the home jurisdiction, and entrance into active membership in the firm. In effect, this employment abroad is a period of apprenticeship, preparatory to the responsibility of managing some department of overseas trade; and the practice no doubt has served its purpose well, if we have regard to the results as seen in the extent of the trade which causes the English flag to appear frequently in most seaports in all parts of the globe.

German procedure involved another method of approach to the same goal; and we must admit German thoroughness and efficiency were prolific factors in producing means for stimulating and maintaining profitable commercial interests in many lands. At the time when the World War cast its darkening shadow over the world, Germany had captured a large portion of the trade with the republics of South America, and numerous fleets of merchant steamers were busy in transporting wares from the Fatherland to Africa, Australia and the Far East, not to mention Germany's best customer, the United States. The system employed to produce the technical and versatile skill required to build up and retain this world-encircling commerce was in many ways distinct from that in

force in the British Isles; though, indeed, each involved a residence abroad as a prerequisite for employment in the home office. The German system was characterized by an intensive training in languages and procedure entering into foreign trade; but (unlike corresponding English youths) candidates for preference and promotion into partnership, were expected to acquire a preliminary acquaintance with the essentials of their calling by attendance at one of the excellent foreign-trade schools maintained at public expense in the educational centers of the Empire. The University of Berlin is reputed to have offered to students of world-trade, options of 100 separate courses; and so thoroughly was the educational field covered, that in addition to various dialects of every modern tongue, there were afforded opportunities to become proficient in the Baku language of Central Africa—a language without an alphabet, and consequently not yet reduced to written form. As a result of this requirement of a broad, general foundation as the educational condition precedent to entrance into a career in foreign trade—German traders were exceptionally skilful when seeking to ingratiate themselves with consumers of manufactured wares in foreign fields; and it was by no means an uncommon event to find in this mercantile agent a graduate of a university, and a person well equipped to touch upon literary or scientific themes, or upon subjects in philosophy we do not usually regard as even remotely associated with things commercial—"in a practical world".

The American candidate for cadetship in the field of overseas trade was under a serious handicap through non-existence of either system in the United States, up to the period of the World War. The carrying trade by water routes was so exclusively in the hands or under the control of foreign persons and interests, that few American youths could obtain entrance into that sphere; and it necessarily followed that deep-sea navigation was for them an almost forgotten calling, excepting only among persons associated with the coastwise trade. The same influences existed in the foreign mercantile side of all salt water traffic; and there, too, our American youths found themselves crowded out of a useful and profitable vocation—prohibited from entering upon careers where formerly citizens of the United States had gained fortunes (and also fame) in the period of the redoubtable Yankee clipper ship.

But it was not alone in the sphere of actual experience (perhaps the best as well as the most effective school) that the American student of foreign-trade practice and procedure found the door of opportunity closed and barring the way; indeed no adequate provision for courses preparatory to entrance into foreign-trade service was anywhere to be found in the curriculum of our colleges, universities and technical schools. Something creative and nerving was called for, if American foreign traffic in its various forms was to revive, and again become an important factor in world-trade; but in what quarter were American youths to look for such encouragement and aid, when periods of actual experience abroad or of anticipatory solution of those problems per study and application (the English and German methods)—were alike unavailable? How *could* this intricate and baffling problem be solved?

The difficulty indeed was great, and apparently insurmountable; but as an aftermath of the Great War that obstacle has melted away and disappeared, and we now possess at least one institution which affords instruction and practical experience in proportions suitable for student use. Thus there are again provided opportunities for careers in American foreign trade. In this connection I am referring to the Foreign Service School, the most recent feature of the general course of instruction carried on under the general authority and charter-rights of that more than century-old institution—Georgetown University.

In view of this gap in our educational system, as it existed prior to 1914, numerous demands for young men qualified to occupy positions abroad in public and in mercantile life were perforce of circumstances left unfilled, with the result that the demand for something formative and productive in way of education for foreign service, became increasingly insistent. As the war progressed, Hollanders and other foreign citizens or subjects were grafted upon the stem of our private commercial system; and until that stage was reached where the United States actually entered into the conflict and became an active belligerent, numerous German subjects found employment in the foreign branches of American banks. This condition at best was barely tolerable; and with the declaration of war upon

Germany, the demand and slogan "Place only Americans on guard!" became insistent and imperative. In the public service the need had been very great; but that want had in an imperfect manner been satisfied by drafts upon other departments, *i. e.*, drafts upon those divisions of our government not directly concerned in war-time activities, but yet equipped with a certain proportion of persons skilled in dealings in foreign business and affairs.

With the advent of a new era of extended dealings with many nations in advancement of both our peace-time and our war-time interests, the call for a supply of human material for the keeping in motion of the machinery of American commerce became increasingly peremptory and insistent. In the case of Georgetown University, this demand took on the form of requests by the Departments of State, Treasury, Commerce, Labor and Industry; by the American Federation of Labor on behalf of the mechanical, building and other productive trades; and by numerous corporations standing in the first rank as to capital and resources and extent of production—all looking to the founding of a school that would supply young men with educational equipment and develop in them ambition to adopt foreign trade as a calling and permanent career. In brief, it was felt that the inauguration of such a course would go far toward solving the problem of providing American representatives for American foreign trade.

It was indeed a difficult problem to solve; for—granted the existence of the need—what curriculum would be best, and where could be obtained the skilled instructors such an educational campaign would require? Fortunately, veteran teachers were in command. These leaders laid out a comprehensive plan of work; and thus there finally was evolved a course of study and scholastic procedure which in many ways resembled the facilities afforded by the famous *Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques* of Paris. Indeed, the franchise of the Georgetown University Foreign Service School has features which point to the older French institution as in the main the guide and prototype of the American institution.

In languages, this educational programme is especially complete; for the embassies and other characteristic functions of a capital city afford material of a superlative quality, whenever

the individual attaché or official can be persuaded to devote to educational work the time required for teaching the language of his homeland. Philosophy, law, economics, history, and those other related branches (direct or collateral) which aid us in forming a well-rounded character—each and all are found responding to the same auspicious influence. In each of those branches, studious endeavors are assisted and made more fruitful and inspiring by the adjacent presence of experts whom the various departments have attracted to Washington and attached to their permanent staffs. Even though absent in person, their influence is felt, and to some extent dominates the situation; it is a constant reminder and spur to greater efforts, for at any moment the instructor and the instructed may be subjected to critical scrutiny by masters in their particular line, who can look behind every mask which conceals mere pretence, or hides incompetence in any of its other myriad forms.

Advancing steadily and by healthful stages, the Foreign Service School of Georgetown University, under the guidance of its able Regent, Edmund A. Walsh, educational pioneer in the field of preparation for official or commercial service, has now (after only eighteen months of existence) achieved a membership of 400 students; while approximately as many additional aspirants to the honors and emoluments of American foreign trade have found it necessary to turn their thoughts and their footsteps to other temples of learning. Doubtless much good human material has unwittingly been cast aside in the element thus discarded; but the School has conscientiously sought to cull out and select only those applicants who are comprised in that superior class who will earnestly pursue their allotted studies, and, after graduation, will tenaciously "stick on the job", in whatever foreign land their employment may call them to go.

Other courses may offer greater inducements; other instructors may drive home their truths with greater force and skill; but in one particular the Foreign Service School concedes precedence to no other institution of learning—namely, in conscientious endeavor to produce good scholars, good Americans, and, above all, men of ripe character who will be true to every interest of their employers, and by high quality of service, will best advance their own interests.